

blowing florets, i wanna dance in the air by meliebee

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Gen, I love these kids, female friendship is more valuable than gold, fun fact: the time it took for the author to watch all of s2 and start writing fanfiction was 5 days, let girls be friends 2k17, max and el are friends!, no really I love these kids I would DIE for them, or at least they're getting there, someone save me from myself, this is SO SLOPPY but I have some Feelings so sacrifices must be made, this is literally unedited and written in like 30 minutes pls be gentle

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Max (Stranger Things), Eleven & Nancy Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Max/Lucas Sinclair

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Summary:

El blows air from her mouth slowly and Nancy pats her shoulder sympathetically. "I'm not saying you have to be best friends, El. Mike didn't trust her at first either. I just think you might actually like her if you got to know her." El looks up at her doubtfully and Nancy smiles reassuringly. "She's not going to replace you, El. No one could ever do that, I promise. Just give it a try, maybe?" She squeezes El's shoulder and returns easily to the shirts, making small noises of disapproval at a particularly large flannel, or throwaway comments about the weather, while El sits on the bed with her legs crossed and thinks.

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Author's Note:

title is from grace vanderwaal, "florets," and pls do urself a favour and go listen to her entire new album bc its so pure and soft and heart-pulling

self-care is listening to grace vanderwaal and writing fanfiction about 13 year olds, pass it on,

El thinks Nancy is the prettiest person in all of Hawkins, and also the world. She loves Nancy, loves the way that Nancy smiles at her and pulls on her curls and promises to take her shopping, loves the way Nancy finds time for El and doesn't treat her like she's a little kid. Mike thinks El just hasn't known Nancy long enough, but whenever El's eyes brighten when Nancy walks in the room, Mike's smile goes soft, so El knows he doesn't really mean it.

"El," says Nancy, two weeks after the Gate closed, a week after Hopper let Mike visit the cabin. They're sitting on the bed, going through El's clothes, because Joyce asked if El's only clothes were plaid and denim, and was met with only guilty silence, so Nancy is staging An Intervention. "Have you met Max?"

El looks at Nancy out of the corner of her eyes. Yes, she's met Max. No, she doesn't want to meet Max again. She'd prefer it, honestly, if Max left and El never had to think of her again. She shrugs, and Nancy looks at her with her lips slightly pursed and head somewhat tilted, in an expression that Mike wears when he's thinking about how to say something.

"Well," says Nancy, folding another one of El's shirts. "Maybe you should."

El frowns immediately, and Nancy glances at her. She's not laughing at her, or arguing with her, but she looks like she's waiting for something. El shifts on the bed unhappily, trying to put her feelings into words. "Don't like Max."

Nancy raises her eyebrows calmly. "Oh? Why's that?" There's no condemnation in her voice, just innocent curiosity, and El glances at her again, from underneath her mop of curls.

Why doesn't El like Max? Well. El's mouth twists as she thinks, trying to find the best way to explain it. She doesn't like the way that Max talks to Lucas and Dustin, she doesn't like the way Lucas looks at Max like he's forgotten anyone else exists, she doesn't like the way that Max shoved her hand at El and just expected her to take it, and she especially doesn't like the way that Mike smiled at Max when they stood together in the gym. She doesn't like the thought that Max replaced her; that she's stolen El's only friends from her.

El blows air from her mouth slowly and Nancy pats her shoulder sympathetically. "I'm not saying you have to be best friends, El. Mike didn't trust her at first either. I just think you might actually like her if you got to know her." El looks up at her doubtfully and Nancy smiles reassuringly. "She's not going to replace you, El. No one could ever do that, I promise. Just give it a try, maybe?" She squeezes El's shoulder and returns easily to the shirts, making small noises of disapproval at a particularly large flannel, or throwaway comments about the weather, and El sits on the bed with her legs crossed and thinks.

Two weeks later, she's sitting in Mike's basement, for what Hopper has announced is the monthly Escape Day. Her knee is pressed up against Mike's, his face animated as he narrates the D&D game, Lucas and Dustin clamouring to explain the rules to Max, who eyes them both distrustfully. Will had offered to teach her too, and she knows Mike would be happy to oblige, but she'd rather sit here and soak in the love she can feel radiating off of this group of people she calls her family.

Max pushes out her chair, huffing in exasperation when all four boys glance at her in confusion and mild indignation from Dustin, and then she wanders off to grab a glass of water. El watches her leave, chewing on her lip, and then pushes away from the table as well, brushing off Mike's confused glance with a smile, squeezing his

fingers with hers, turning to head up the stairs, following the sound of Max's footsteps.

"Oh! El." Max sounds wary when El enters the kitchen, almost cornered, glass of water in hand and eyes cautious.

"Max," El replies, the word unfamiliar and strange on her tongue, but nice. *Max.*

"Sorry, um..." Max's fingers on the glass twitch, and she inches towards the door that El's just come through. "I'll just..."

"Wait," says El, and Max freezes. El takes a breath. She's not very good at this, she's never had to be. She's never had a chance to learn, not really. She tries to remember what Nancy said, that maybe she'll like Max is she gets to know her, that they could be friends. Friends. She hesitates, and Max eyes her uncertainly, and then El sticks her hand out bravely, determined.

Max stares at her.

"I'm El," says El. "Friends?"

Max keeps staring, but El refuses to back down, silently waiting, and slowly Max's composure breaks.

She reaches forward to grasp El's hand and smiles, still hesitant but almost excited. "Yeah," she answers. "Okay. Friends."

El's smile widens, and she pulls Max into a hug, holding on until Max's body relaxes somewhat, and then pulls away, still smiling. She'd usually never initiate this contact, but... Max punches Mike's arm sometimes and he just laughs at her, and he doesn't look on guard around her, and he smiles at her, and if Mike can trust her than El can too.

They return to the basement with Max's hand in El's, the readhead trailing behind her, stunned. The boys all look up in unison, the silence sudden and abrupt. Lucas' jaw drops and Dustin frantically glances between El and Max, Will looking unsure, but El has eyes

only for Mike, who smiles warmly at her, all soft and glowing.

“When you’re allowed out,” begins Max, and El looks up in anticipation. A lot of sentences these days start with some variation of *when you’re out*. She can come out once a month, to Mike’s place, usually, because Hopper figured out pretty quickly that trying to stop the party from seeing each other was a futile effort, and after everything, he didn’t really want to keep them apart anyway. So she comes out once a month, and Mike usually visits her on the weekends, or every second weekend, and Dustin and Lucas and even Will often tag along, and more recently Max will come too. It’s still not entirely safe for her to come out, says Hopper, but it will be, soon. (This time, El believes him.) (And Hopper says he’s arranged it with the principal so that she can go to the Snowball. For that, El could forgive him anything.)

Anyways: “When you’re allowed out,” begins Max, “I’m going to teach you to skateboard. If that’s cool, I mean.”

El tilts her head at her, both girls sitting on El’s bed. “Skate-board?”

Max nods. “It’s this plank thing that has wheels, so you can get from place to place quickly. Hence, zoomer.” She winks at El and El grins. “Anyways, when you get out, I’m going to teach you.”

“Okay,” agrees El, and adds it to her mental list of Things To Do When Out. So far, the list is as follows: get real waffles with Hopper, go shopping with Nancy and Joyce, go bike riding with Will, visit the arcade, do everything with Mike, (El’s personal addition,) meet Steve, (Dustin’s idea,) and now learn how to skateboard with Max. “Tubular.”

Max stills, staring wide-eyed, and El stifles her grin, blinking innocently.

“What.” Max says flatly, and then El can’t help herself from giggling.

“Lucas said—” Max cuts her off with a loud groan, falling backwards on the bed, and El laughs.

Max looks so pretty, thinks El, and when she tells Max this, a pleased flush crawls across her friend's cheeks. "So do you," Max replies, looking over El with a smile, which El returns easily.

"Saw you with Lucas," El adds conversationally, pouring herself a cup of punch from the bowl Nancy abandoned some time ago. Max reddens, but she's smiling.

"Saw you with Mike," she shoots back, and El blushes instinctively. She glances over her shoulder, seeing Mike chatting with Will and Lucas while Dustin dances with an unfamiliar girl, looking somehow both smug and shell-shocked. Mike must sense her gaze because he turns to catch her eyes, smiling the way she's been missing for a year, and Max snickers and bumps their shoulders together.

"Aw," she teases, but it's friendly and lacks any bite, sounding fond more than anything else. "Cuties."

El rolls her eyes, nudging Max backwards and pointing her head unsubtly towards Lucas, who glances over at Max every few seconds, with a big dumb grin on his face. "Cuties," she mimics, and Max rolls her eyes back at El, linking their arms together.

"I'm glad," she says eventually, the two girls swaying slightly from side to side in time with the music echoing through the school hall, "that we're friends."

El squeezes Max's arms. "Me too," she says quietly. "I would miss you if you weren't here."

It's a backwards sort of compliment, that, but Max looks at El and smiles gently and El knows that Max understands exactly what she's saying, and that is more than enough.

Author's Note:

pls review friends! every single thought counts :)